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ABSTRACT

Enrollments in city public schools over the last 20 years are reviewed and analyzed. Enrollment in the member cities of the Great City Schools (GCS) declined at twice the national rate between 1970 and 1990, at 23.1% versus 10.2%. The composition of urban school enrollment also changed dramatically. The Anglo American share of GCS enrollment between 1970 and 1990 decreased from 48.5% to 23.5%, and by 1990, more than 75% of GCS students were children of color, with more than half of those attending GCS schools eligible for free or reduced lunches. The GCS school systems educate a disproportionate share of the nation's new immigrants and language minorities. In 1990, more than one third of all students with limited English proficiency attended GCS schools. The changing demographics of urban enrollment places many burdens on urban school systems, including demands for preschool education, enhanced instruction, bilingual education, and social services. America cannot be competitive in a global society unless urban children are afforded education and access to the American dream. (Contains five charts and eight references.) (SLD)

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Council of the Great City Schools

urban Indicator

A Research Publication

Vol. 1, No. 1 July 1993

Urban School Enrollment: Twenty Year Trends

A great deal of change has occurred in our cities over the last twenty years: residential patterns shifting to the suburbs, the poor and people of color residing in larger proportions in the central cities, the influx of immigrant groups, and an environment marked by social and economic deterioration. The changing urban demographics have a direct impact on our Great City Schools.

The purpose of this report is to review and analyze enrollments in city public schools over the last twenty years. What are the trends? What now are the characteristics of urban school students? How has the composition changed? What are the demographic trends affecting urban school enrollments? What issues are raised by these trends?

Highlights

- Enrollment in the Great City Schools (GCS) declined at twice the national rate between 1970 and 1990 (23.1 percent versus 10.2 percent).
- The composition of urban school enrollment also changed dramatically. Between 1970 and 1990, Anglos' share of GCS enrollments decreased from 48.5 percent to 23.5 percent. In 1990, more than three-quarters of GCS students were children of color. Further, in that same year more than half (54.8 percent) of the students attending GCS were eligible for free or reduced lunches.
- GCS systems educate a disproportionate share of the nation's new immigrants and language minorities; in 1990, more than one-third (35.9 percent) of all students with Limited English Proficiency (LEP) attended GCS.
- The percent of urban school-aged youth attending public schools rather than private grew from 75.5 percent in 1970 to 81.2 percent in 1990.
- The changing demographics of our nation's cities places many burdens on urban school systems including greater demands for pre-school, enhanced instructional programs, bilingual education, and social services.
- Between 1970 and 1990, the amount of local revenues to GCS was down by 25.5 percent, when adjusted for inflation.

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Demographic Trends
General Population

National

- Between 1970 and 1990, the U.S. resident population increased by 22.4 percent, from 203.2 million to 248.7 million.
- In the 1970s, the U.S. resident population increased by 11.1 percent; and in the 1980s, population was up by 9.8 percent.

Great Cities

- During the period from 1970 to 1990, the population of the Great Cities increased by only 2.0 percent, compared to 22.4 percent nationally.
- While the overall U.S. population increased in the 1970s, the population of the Great Cities declined from 37.7 million in 1970 to 36.6 million in 1980 (a 2.9 percent decrease).
- During the 1980s the population of the Great Cities increased by 4.9 percent—only half the rate of the national population increase (9.8 percent).

Great City Share of National

- In 1970, 18.5 percent of the U.S. population resided in the Great Cities; by 1990 only 15.4 percent of the nation's population did.

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School-Aged Population

National

- Between 1970 and 1990, the 5-17 year-old school-aged population in the nation declined by 13.9 percent, from 52.5 million to 45.2 million.
- Between 1990 and 2000, the nation's school-aged population is expected to increase by 14.6 percent, from 45.2 million to 51.8 million (NCES, 1992).
- The school-age population as a share of general population declined between 1970 and 1990, from 25.8 percent to 18.2 percent.

Great Cities

- The 5-17 year-old population in the Great Cities fell considerably in the 1970s, from 8.9 million in 1970 to 7.1 million in 1980, a decrease of 20.2 percent compared to a 9.7 percent decrease nationally.
- The rate of decline in the Great City 5-17 year-old population slowed somewhat in the 1980s. Between 1980 and 1990, the school-aged population declined by 11.3 percent, compared to 20.2 percent between 1970 and 1980.

Great City Share of National

- During the period of 1970 to 1990, the share of the nation's school-aged population living in the Great Cities declined from 16.9 percent to 14.0 percent.

School Enrollment Trends

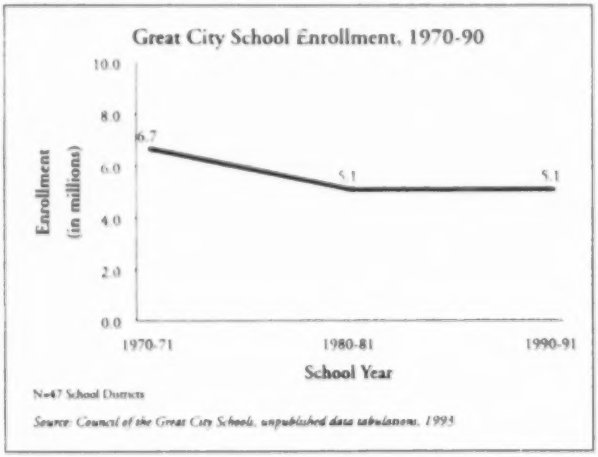
National

- During the period from 1970 to 1990, overall public and private school K-12 enrollment declined by 9.4 percent, from 51.3 million to 46.5 million (National Center for Education Statistics, 1993).
- During the 1980s, overall public and private school enrollment held steady with a slight increase of 1.0 percent (from 46.2 million to 46.5 million).
- Public school enrollments were down by 10.2 percent between 1970 and 1990. In comparison, private school enrollments declined by 3.7 percent during this period.
- Much of the decline in public school enrollment took place between 1970 and 1980. Enrollment in this sector decreased 10.9 percent between 1970 and 1980 and held steady from 1980 to 1990.
- In 1990, most of the national school-aged population attended public schools (91.1 percent); twenty years earlier 87.5 percent of school-aged youth attended the nation's public schools.

Great City Schools

- In 1970, enrollment in Great City Schools stood at approximately 6.7 million and declined to 5.1 million by 1990, a 23.9 percent decrease. [☞ *Chart 1*]

Chart 1



- Between 1980 and 1990, enrollment in GCS held steady at 5.1 million.
- Total enrollment in GCS declined at twice the rate of national public school enrollment between 1970 to 1990 (23.9 percent vs. 10.2 percent).

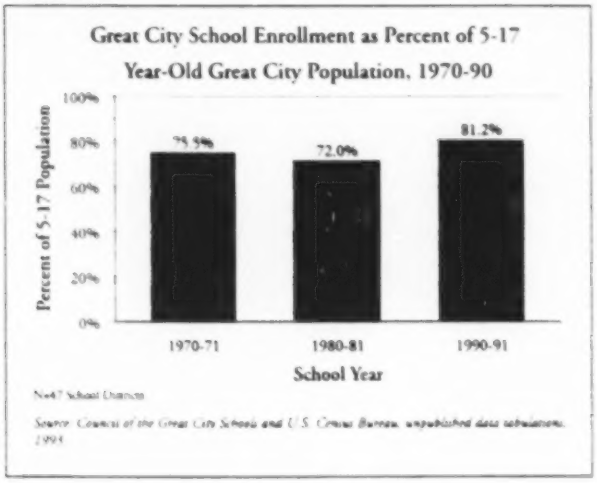
The overwhelming majority of the school-aged population in the Great Cities attend Great Cities Schools (GCS) and are doing so at an increasing rate.

- In 1970-71, more than three out of four (75.5 percent) of the Great Cities' school-aged population attended GCS; by 1990-91 more than four out five did so (81.2 percent). [☞ *Chart 2*]

Great City Schools' Share of National

- Today, GCS enroll a slightly less share of national public school enrollments than in the 1970s. In 1970, 14.6 percent of all public school students attended GCS; by 1990 12.5 percent did.

Chart 2

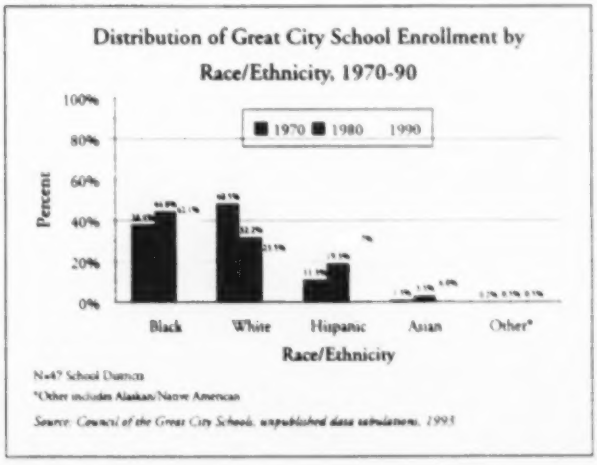


Racial and Ethnic Patterns

National

- In 1970, 79.1 percent of all students enrolled in the nation's public schools were Anglos; African Americans comprised 14.9 percent of total enrollments, Hispanics 5.0 percent, and other races represented 1.0 percent.
- By 1990, 67.9 percent of the students enrolled in public schools were Anglos. African Americans had a slightly larger share with 16.2 percent, Hispanics comprised 11.5 percent, and other races represented 4.4 percent.

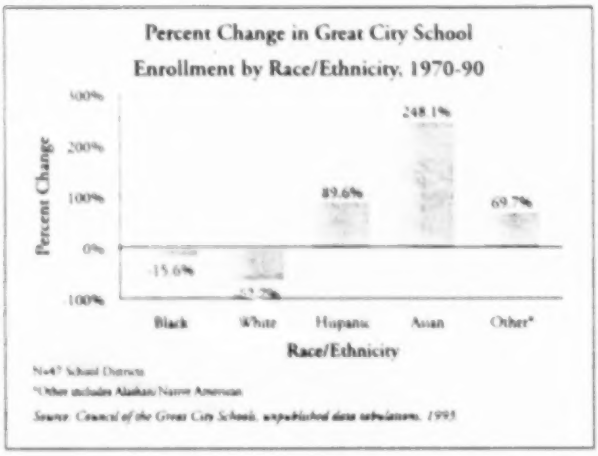
Chart 3



Great City Schools

- In 1970, almost half of all GCS students attending GCS were Anglo (48.5 percent); by 1990, only one-quarter of all students were Anglo (23.5 percent). [☞ *Chart 3*]
- Between 1970 and 1990, the number of Anglo students enrolled in GCS declined by 62.7 percent and the enrollment of African Americans declined by 15.6 percent. [☞ *Chart 4*]

Chart 4



An increasing number of immigrants are attending urban schools. Today about 1.3 million foreign born people are entering the United States each year for permanent residence. A large number of them have school-aged children (Raffel, Boyd et al., 1993), and a disproportionate share settle in the Great Cities.

- Between 1970 and 1990 the number of Hispanics attending GCS increased by 89.6 percent; at the same time, Asian American enrollments tripled during this period.
- Further, in 1990 GCS enrolled 35.9 percent of all Limited English Proficient (LEP) students in the U.S.

Great City Schools' Share of National

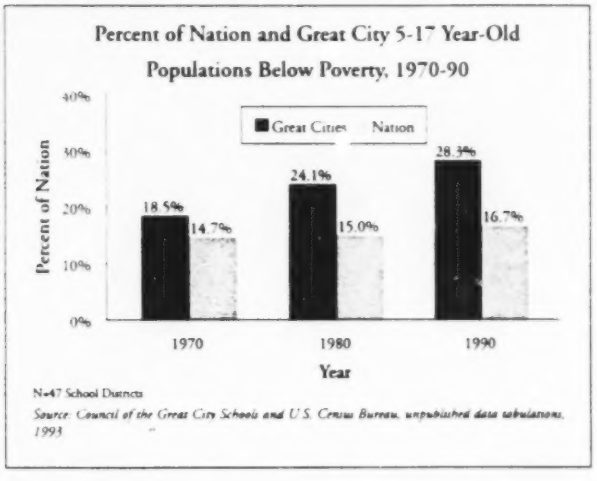
- The proportion of the nation's African American students attending the GCS schools declined from 37.5 percent in 1970 to 31.3 percent by 1990.
- In 1980, 30.2 percent of the nation's Hispanic enrollment attended GCS, as did 28.9 percent in 1990.

Poverty

National

- The poverty rate among school-aged children in the nation increased from 14.7 percent in 1970 to 16.7 percent in 1990. [☞ *Chart 5*]

Chart 5



- The total number of school-aged children in poverty in the nation decreased between 1970 and 1990, from 7.7 million to 7.5 million (a 2.6 percent decrease).

Great City Schools

- In 1990, 54.8 percent of GCS students were eligible for free or reduced price lunch.
- Between 1970 and 1990, the poverty rate among school-aged children (5-17 year-olds) in the Great Cities increased from 18.5 percent to 28.3 percent and the number of school-aged children in poverty in the Great Cities increased by 9.3 percent between 1970 and 1990.

Great City Schools' Share of National

- In 1990, GCS enrolled nearly a quarter (23.5 percent) of the nation's public and private school children eligible for free or reduced price lunches.
- Between 1970 and the 1990, the percent of the nation's school-aged poor children living in the Great Cities increased from 21.3 percent to 23.8 percent.
- The poverty rate among school-aged children is 70.0 percent higher than the national average.

Implications

Our nation's cities are facing challenging conditions, characterized by the influx of immigrants, increasing poverty among children, declining urban labor markets with increased skill requirements, increasing crime, racial isolation of urban communities, budget cuts in major education programs and uneven economic growth. These problems raise multiple issues for urban schools, including:

- If the economic and social conditions prevalent in cities continue, the need and demand for services will increase. Where will the money come from to meet those needs?
- The influx of immigrants to our cities creates further challenges to urban school systems because many of these individuals come from diverse and lesser developed economies, are poor, unskilled and often do not speak English. How do urban schools assimilate these new immigrants?
- How do cities balance the needs of education against other urban needs, especially during budget cutbacks?
- What are the most effective ways to meet the needs of such a diverse urban school enrollment?

Urban school systems are called upon to meet not only the educational needs of their students, but also a variety of social needs. No other institution in society has more demands or expectations. Yet urban school systems cannot do it alone; the problems of the cities can only be addressed when all of society makes a commitment. America cannot begin to be competitive in a global economy unless urban children are afforded the education and access to the American dream. Our nation can no longer continue to neglect these children. The future of America depends on it. ❖

Great City Schools
Fall Conference
Oct. 26-31, 1993
HOUSTON

Announcement

The Council of the Great City Schools is pleased to bring to its membership and the public this inaugural issue of the Urban Indicator. It will be published at least six times annually with each edition devoted to a single issue of critical importance in urban education. This publication is another in a series of new products and services that will be brought to you by the Council of the Great City Schools. Your comments and suggestions are most welcome.

—Michael Casserly
Executive Director

urban Indicator

The Research department of the Council of the Great City Schools publishes the *Urban Indicator*, a collection of short analytical papers exploring timely and pertinent issues facing urban education.

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Notes

[1] Percents were calculated by dividing the 1970, 1980 and 1990 Census counts of children aged 5-17 below poverty residing in the Great Cities (or counties) by the total 5-17 year-old population in the identical cities (or county schools). While most poor children are enrolled in public schools, these data do not represent public school enrollment poverty rates.

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Key Facts

✓ 1990-91 Great City School districts with the:

• Largest enrollment:	New York City	955,514
• Smallest enrollment	Phoenix Union H.S.D.	22,251

✓ Great City School districts with the greatest:

• Increase in enrollment, 1970-90:	Fresno	+25.8%
• Decrease in enrollment, 1970-90:	St. Louis	-61.5%

✓ 1990-91 Great City School districts with the greatest percentage of:

• African Americans:	Atlanta	90.8%
• Anglos:	Portland	72.1%
• Hispanics:	Los Angeles	63.5%
• Asian/Pacific Islanders:	San Francisco	41.3%

✓ 1990-91 Great City School districts with the greatest:

• Enrollment as a percent of the city population:	Washington, D.C.	21.2%
• Enrollment as a percent of the 5-17 year-old population:	Norfolk	94.4%

✓ In 1990-91, the Great City Schools enrolled 5.1 million students which is equal to the population of Denmark.

✓ The 1990-91 Great City Schools enrollment was larger than the populations for:

Finland:	5.0 million
Benin:	4.7 million
Libya:	4.2 million
Laos:	4.0 million

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